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Andy Warhol as a Neutral Facade

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Introduction

"There's nothing really to understand about my work."[1] taken literally this statement of Andy Warhol's might cause one simply to dismiss his silk-screened images as the mechanical designs of a commercial artist, but it more accurately conveys his perceptions of self and the shallow world around him. As a leader of the revolutionary Pop Art movement, Warhol's synthesis of popular culture and high art serves as vehicle for his philosophically more subtle, yet pessimistic attitude. In his philosophy he states, "Everything is nothing,"[2] which reflects his inherent insecurity with himself as manifested in his superficial existence.

Warhol approaches his art and life on the surface in order to insulate himself from a more threatening reality. By experiencing life on a superficial level, he protects himself from pain or disappointment. When everything is nothing, he has nothing to lose. In his Philosophy, he illustrates his basic mistrust when describes a nightmare he had in which the people's faces are disfigured so that they

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[1] Gretchen Berg, "Nothing to Lose - Interview with Andy Warhol" Cahiers du Cinema in English 10 (May 1967):43

[2] Andy Warhol, The Philosophy of Andy Warhol(From A to B and Back Again Hart Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1975, P.183

must wear plastic across them because underneath there is nothing.[3] Warhol perceives others as lacking a genuine self in the same way that he doubts his own self-worth, and therefore he creates a world of neutral facades.

Like other Pop artists, he derives his subject matter from American popular culture and media generated images: billboards, product labels, advertisements, celebrity photos and tabloid magazines. He does not glamorize these objects, nor does he use them in an explicit social commentary on American culture; rather to Warhol they embody his reality. When describing the emptiness on which he chooses to focus, he says, "It doesn't mean if you don't believe in nothing that it's nothing. You have to treat the nothing as if it were something. Make something out of nothing."[4] Throughout his career Warhol uses the realm of art to make something out of the nothingness.

Warhol illustrates this void by focusing on the media star, a superficial image of American society. His treatment of the female celebrity, as in his Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and Jackie Kennedy silk-screens, enhances the shallowness of these emblems of glamour with his detached approach to the canvas and emphasis on mass culture and production. Warhol's portraits of Marilyn, Liz and Jackie

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[3] IBID p.9

[4] IBID p.183

stress the depersonalization of the individual in its transformation into a cultural symbol. He treats these women with the same dead pan veneration as a Campbell's soup label or a Brillo box.[5] The portraits have no personal or psychological dimension and are interchangeable as personifications of artificiality. The star's persona is an "ideological *effect*" which typifies the institution that generates his or her meaning.[6] The sex symbol, the movie star and the first lady, are unificd as products of the American media system. As living constructs of the superficial, they provide the embodiment of the shallowness which Warhol seeks to portray.

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[5] Richard Lacayo, "Warhol," Metropolitan Home, Jan 11, 1990:32

[6] Simon Watney, "The Warhol Effect," The Work of Andy Warhol, Gary Garrels, Ed., Dia Art foundation, Bay press, Seattle 1989

Self Image

Warhol sees himself as a passive void toward which others gravitate. His is the center of an entourage of wild characters at the Factory and amongst them he presents himself as the uncommitted observer. He articulates his vacuous sense of self when he says, "Some critic called me the Nothingness Himself and that didn't help my sense of existence any. Then I realized that existence itself was nothing and I felt better. But I'm obsessed with looking in the mirror and seeing no one, nothing...if a mirror looks into a mirror what is there to see?"[7] Warhol's own self image is just as superficial as his portrayal of Marilyn, Liz, and Jackie. He does not present himself as a having an underlying identity, but rather as a vacant and reflective mirror: a neutral facade.

Warhol generalizes his own image of passivity, as the "artist" to match his paintings, in the same way as Marilyn, Liz and Jackie come to represent the idealized female and icons of society. Marilyn expresses this concept when she states, "Do you know the book *Everyman*? Well I want to be in the fantasy of everyman."[8] Popular culture seizes the private lives of Marilyn, Liz and Jackie, glamorizing them

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[7] Warhol, Philosophy p. 7

[8] Marilyn Monroe quoted in Life Magazine Aug. 17, 1962:32

into icons of femininity. Warhol covers these publicity photographs with flat areas of bright color to emphasize the mask-like qualities of their personas. Their cosmeticized faces merge into a single plane to become two-dimensional surfaces enlivened by color and pattern.[9] In his silk-screens, *Red Jackie* (1964), *Early Colored Liz* (1963), and *Shot Orange Marilyn* (1964) the intense colors, which delineate their bright red lips, painted eyes and dyed hair, make these images disturbingly similar. It is as though only the contours of each woman's face have changed the design of his composition. Warhol's interpretation of the individual as a non-person, or as a fulfiller of fantasies, is emphasized by these portraits. He articulates this concept of blankness when describing a beautiful, young debutante who joined his factory entourage:

> "She had a poignantly vacant, vulnerable quality that made her a reflection of everybody's private fantasies. Taxi could be anything you wanted her to be - a little girl, a woman, intelligent, dumb, rich, poor - anything. She was a wonderful, beautiful blank. The mystique to end all mystiques."[10]

Warhol markets himself as the persona of an "artist," and he carefully presents his own image as a symbol to accompany his paintings. The fiction of his own personality

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[9] Carter Ratcliff, Warhol, Abbeville Press, New York, 1983, p.70

[10] Warhol, Philosophy, p.33

associated with his work becomes almost as important as the works themselves. While Marilyn is easily recognized by her glamorous blonde hair and full red lips, Warhol devises an equally identifiable physical image for himself. With his all black costume topped with silver hair and that "cool, eyeball-through-the-wall spaced look,"[11] he is hardly mistaken for the average man. Warhol creates and plays the role of a celebrity, which is in itself a work of art.[12]

He strives to elevate himself to the same level of public notoriety as these stars to become a marketable product. Harold Rosenberg articulates the connection the art and the artist's persona in stating that "the power to make one's signature count is acquired through a fiction launched upon the public...the artist gains his authority through marketing his alter ego."[13] The appeal of Warhol's celebrity image as it overshadows his art was dramatized at the Institute of Contemporary Art of the University of Pennsylvania when, during the opening of his exhibition, all of his paintings had to be removed from the walls because of

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[11] Andy Warhol and Pat Hacket, Popism Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1980, p.20

[12] Irving Sandler, quoted in The Work of Andy Warhol, Gary Garrels Ed., Dia Art Foundation, Bay Press, Seattle, 1989, p.137

[13] Harold Rosenberg, Art on the Edge, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975, p.101

the uncontrollable crowd.[14] Instead of his art, Warhol as a celebrity and the opening as a media event provided the attraction. Warhol revels in this occurrence and sees it as appropriate to the times. He says, "We were the art exhibit, we were the art incarnate and the sixties were really about people, not about what they did"[15] Warhol's image is what attracts the attention of the media and the public.

Warhol's personal confrontations with the media from which these celebrities evolve emphasize the artificiality of his public persona. His attitude towards interviews is one of playful amusement. He does not expect an accurate depiction of himself by the media, since he in fact considers existence itself to be a void, and therefore toys with interviewers. Throughout his career, Warhol repeatedly changed his biographical information, such as his date of birth, and he constantly answered questions with a comical and mocking attitude and in doing so avoided presenting any concrete opinions. In an interview with Barry Blinderman, he replies that his favorite artist is Walt Disney.[16] He answers the questions presented to him in such a way as to undermine any sense of their importance. In his interview with

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14 Warhol and Hackett, Popism, p.133

15 IBID

16 Barry Blinderman, "Modern Myths: An Interview with Andy Warhol," Arts Magazine, (Oct. 1981): 40

Gretchen Berg he illustrates his attitude when he says, "I don't talk very much during interviews; I'm really not saying anything right now."[17] Warhol further manipulates the media's representation of him by often using other people to do his phone interviews. At one point he even sent someone else on a lecture tour for him to accentuate the replaceability of his image. Warhol's antics are not only amusing, but they emphasize the fragility of his persona, which often simply reiterates an already formed opinion. Warhol expresses the absurdity of media representation when he says, "Almost every journalist never wants to know what you really think - they just want the answers that fit the questions that fit the story they want to write."[18]

Warhol's marketable persona and his trademark silk-screens fit into the developing definition of art in the sixties. Pop Art contradicts the intrinsically personal references of the previous Abstract Expressionist movement and brings art back to the concrete world. His depictions of Marilyn, Liz and Jackie strongly contrast Barnett Newman's evocation of the sublime or the timeless universality of Mark Rothko's floating shapes. Like other Pop artists his revival of the figurative image and detached technique dissolve the distinctions between high art and popular culture. By

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[17] Berg, "Nothing to lose - Interview with Andy Warhol." p.40

[18] Warhol, Philosophy, p.167

negating this boundary, his art as well as his personality are comparable to mass media symbols and are void of the personalization and emotionalism of previous trends in American art.

Warhol yearned to achieve star status and was often obsessed with the idea of becoming famous. His own fascination with stardom clearly influenced his choice of Marilyn, Liz and Jackie as his subjects. Warhol had a passion for gossip, and he devoutly read tabloid magazines and newspapers. He even called gossip columnist, Dorothy Killgallen, every day for an update on the latest news.[19] This desire to attain stardom is attributed to his dissatisfaction with himself during childhood, and an attempt to establish a different identity.[20] As a child Warhol was often sick, which isolated him from other children and forced him to spend long periods of time in bed, where he poured through gossip magazines. He was further alienated from others as a child by his low status as the son of poor immigrant parents.[21] The fantasy life of the American celebrity was a means of breaking away from these

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[19] Patrick Smith, Andy Warhol's Art and Films, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1986, p.120

[20] Kynaston McShine, Andy Warhol: A Retrospective, Kynaston McShine Ed., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1989, p.13

[21] IBID

limitations. Just as the public identifies with the glamour and scandal associated with Marilyn, Liz and Jackie, Warhol viewed the Tabloids, not only as a source of sensational news, but also a vehicle for fame. Following the lives of the celebrities provided Warhol with recognition and glamour which he craved.[22]

The glamour associated with Marilyn, Liz and Jackie is part of their impact. His portraits envelope their prior position in the complex system of the public representations.[23] Warhol not only acknowledges this sense of familiarity and admiration, but builds upon it. His flat, unemotional portraits isolate Marilyn, Liz and Jackie from their context so that all that is left of them is their glamorous facade. Even in his first image of Liz, *Daily News* (1962), which includes its front page newspaper setting, the impact of the information as gossip or "news" is nullified by its existence on a canvas and its position in an art gallery or museum. Through his use of the silk-screen process to produce the off-register, overdone look of the star's makeup and the replication of images, he creates a paradox of this societal glamour. The harsh greens and oranges which he places over the outlines of Marilyn's face almost mar the image and ironically negate some of its allure. He

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[22] IBID p.16

[23] Watney, "The Warhol Effect" p.119

vulgarizes the appeal of these media beauties by taking it to its own extreme.[24]

Warhol grasps on to the images of these beauties to compensate for his own physical inadequacies. His personal insecurity manifests itself through his dissatisfaction with his physical appearance. Warhol articulates his attempt to mask his deficient exterior and diminished inner self when he says, "So now the pimple's covered, but am I really covered?" and then he goes on to describes his complexion as "the albino-chalk skin. Parchment-like, reptilian almost blue."[25] He even created images of himself with a thinner nose and fuller hair in an attempt to improve his looks. His precarious self image may have also affected his personal relationships in that his homosexual endeavors disseminate any chance of female rejection.

In seeing himself as a surface persona, Warhol negates any sense of his emotions and distances himself from intimacy. While the media nullifies the emotions of Marilyn, Liz and Jackie, Warhol neutralizes his own feelings. He describes how when he got his first television set he stopped having close relationships with people. Warhol even goes so far as to describe his affair with his T.V. and his marriage

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[24] Smith, Andy Warhol's Art and Films , p.123

[25] Warhol, Philosophy, p.10

to his tape recorder.[26] In his book, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol:From A to B and Back again*, he refers to all of his friends singularly as B. and to himself as A. as though neither they nor himself have an individual identity. He strives to be like a emotionless machine in the same way that his paintings are void of any personal touch. According to Warhol, "It's too hard to care...I don't want to get too close...I don't like to touch things,that's why my work is so distant from myself."[27] Everything in Warhol's world, especially his personal relationships, is on the surface.

The public claims a false intimacy with these celebrities to create an ideally shallow relationship for Warhol. A sense of commonality results as millions of people "know" the same person, and even refer to Marilyn simply by her first name. When President Kennedy was assassinated, and images of the event pervaded the media, millions joined Jackie in her mourning. They professed sympathy and regret for her as though she were a mutual friend. *Jackie (The week that was)* (1963) consists of repeated silk-screens of the photographs which innundated the media at the time. This public unity and corresponding depersonalization of relationships, as a result of mass production and media, is distinctly appealing to Warhol. He says, "What's great about

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[26] IBID p.26

[27] Berg, "Nothing to Lose - Interview with Andy Warhol," p.43

this country is that America started the tradition in which the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest....A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke."[28] A sense of homogeneity evolves from the fact that everyone can buy the same products and consume the same images whether they are products or people.

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[28] Warhol, Philosophy, p.101

Consumerism

American society in the sixties was strongly rooted in the consumer mentality emerging from the economic prosperity of the fifties. The development of mass production and advertising promotes the material acquisition of objects and dilutes any sense of individual appreciation. Warhol directly appeals to this consumerism in his creation of his distinct stylistic trademark and accompanying celebrity persona. His art and his image can just as easily and quickly be consumed by popular society as Heinz catsup or Delmonte peaches. His commercial technique as well as his bright advertising colors make his portraits immediately recognizable as "Andythings"[29] that are defined by there stylistic resemblances. They become a trademark of his own to make his works commodities in the art world and his signature style creates his own label.

The commodification of his subjects, like his paintings, is enhanced by remnants of his background in commercial design.[30] This connection is most evident through his use of the silk-screen printing process usually employed by commercial artists. Warhol was a pioneer in the use of this medium for fine art, and his *Marilyn* series, begun in 1962,

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[29] Rosenberg, Art on the Edge, p.99

[30] Charles E. Stuckey, "Warhol in Context, " The Work of Andy Warhol, Garry Garrels Ed., Dia Art foundation, Bay Press, Seattle, 1989, p.5

constituted some of his earliest prints. Warhol also continues to work in collaboration with assistants, which was revolutionary for the postwar artist, as the Abstract Expressionist was often acknowledged for his or her authorial role. Warhol also bases many of the ideas for his works on outside sources in a sense that he does not derive them from inner inspiration. Warhol explains his external motivations saying, "I was never embarrassed about asking someone literally, 'What should I paint?' because pop came from the outside, and how is asking someone for ideas any different from looking for them in magazines."[31]

Warhol's use of the silk-screen process to remove any painterly or hand-made elements in his works, is similar to the technical appearance of product packaging and reinforces their link to mass production. The flat areas of screened color are hardly filled with emotion. When Warhol first changes from his rubber stamp method he says, "Sudoenly it seemed too homemade: I wanted something stronger that gave more of an assembly-line effect."[32] Marilyn, Liz and Jackie are treated in the same manner as a Campbells label on actual soup cans as well as in his paintings. Warhol's images are completely devoid of any gestural intervention and he treats them with same nonchalantness as a supermarket product.(3)

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31 Warhol and Hackett, Popism, p.16

32 IBID p.22

Just as objects created by an assembly-line lose their meaning and become nothing more than mere trademarks of certain brand names, celebrities created by the mass media are stripped of their individuality. The seriality inherent in the status, display and design of the commodity provides the basis for Warhol's composition of depicted objects and his arrangements of them in serially structured grids,[33] as seen in works, such as *Marilyn X 100* (1962), *Ten Lizes* (1963) and *Sixteen Jackies* (1964). Warhol himself states, "The more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel."[34]

Warhol not only repeats these images in single paintings but also through his installation methods. He often displayed his silk-screens by series so that while viewing the exhibition one would be innundated by the resonating photographs, and henceforth become desensitized to their impact. For his first solo exhibition in New York at the Stable Gallery, Warhol installed four *Marilyn* paintings in four different decorator colors in the gallery's hallway as prologue to further series installations.[35] A similar group

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[33] Robert Rosenblum, "Warhol as Art History," Andy Warhol:A Retrospective. Kynaston McShine Ed., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1989, p.43

[34] Warhol and Hackett, Popism, p.50

[35] Stuckey, "Warhol in Context, " p.9

of four Marilyns was later exhibited at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art in 1963. In work, such as *Marilyn Diptych* (1962), and *Double Liz* (1963), Warhol lessens the impact of the single image through his use of the diptych consisting of double images or of single images accompanied by a blank canvas. His utilization of the blank canvas further equates his subjects with nothingness.

Warhol's use of gold, as well as silver, in his silk-screens include references which delineate these stars as objects of the media market. The silver serves as a direct link to the silver screen of Hollywood and Marilyn and Liz as the objects of that medium.[36] The gold is a visual reference to celebrities as a "gold mine" for Hollywood studios and the media.[37] The pigment denotes the economic value of gold as a commodity and as a measure of wealth. The gold colored tondi of Marilyn and Jackie also bear a strong resemblance to gold coins. Warhol presents these women in the same mode of the emblems as presidents used to signify American currency. The media generated image, from movie star to artist, clearly embodies monetary and commodity connotations in a consumer society.

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36 Smith, Andy Warhol's Art and Films, p.122

37 IBID p.123

Religion and Death

In creating icons out of these celebrities, Warhol incorporates a religious element into his portraits. He uses traditional methods of religious art to emphasize the god-like images of these women, and to focus on the void of modern religion as it is replaced by the new religion of mass media. His most obviously religious portrait is *Gold Marilyn Monroe* (1962) in which a small image of the star floats at the center of a large gold canvas. His use of gold is often tied to image of the Byzantine mosaics with Marilyn as the modern Madonna.[38] Although Warhol only shows Marilyn's face in his treatment of her, there is still a sense of her as a sex symbol in the associations that accompany her familiar image. Warhol replaces the revered and humble Virgin with the sensuous and erotic Marilyn, while the gold surrounding her gives her a celestial aura.[39] This is further enforced by *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* (1962) in which her disembodied mouth is the focus of veneration. They become holy relics of a new religion isolated in an abstract space.[40] Marilyn is again seen in a religious context when Warhol utilizes the tondo form. He produced *Gold Marilyn* (1962) which consists of

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[38] Robert Pincus-Witten, "Pre-entry:Margins of Error:St. Andy's Devotions," Arts Magazine Summer 1989, p.59

[39] Rosenblum, "Warhol as Art History," p.35

[40] IBID p.36

Marilyn's portrait on two gold tondi and a single tondo entitled, *Head of Marilyn Monroe* (1962). Warhol's depiction in a religious context reinforces the shallowness of her image as a modern icon.

Warhol also presents Liz and Jackie with a religious splendor. *Gold Jackie* and two *Round Jackie* from 1964 place her in center of the tondo form, and one incorporates the gilded gold to intensify the religious connection. He also depicts Liz in a gold background to illustrate the celebrity as the inspiration for modern myths and the new archetypal model. In turn their power and grace elevate them to such a magnitude as to become a divinity, regardless of their means of Ascension.[41] In these paintings he treats religion as just another consumable element of society.

Warhol conveys an attitude of detachment towards death, which like his view of life, is based on the concept of nothingness. For Warhol, death merits the same superficial approach as life. This is articulated when a friend reports that after the near fatal attempt on his life he said that "coming so close to death was like coming so close to life, because life is nothing."[42] His references to death in conjunction with his hollow symbols of life reflect the underlying emptiness pervading his world and his

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41 Pincus-Witten, "Pre-entry: Margins of Error:St. Andy's Devotions," p.58

42 Warhol, Philosophy, p.12

nullification of emotion in relation to even the most grave circumstances. In reference to his disaster series as well as his *Marilyns* Warhol says, "There's no reason for doing it all, just a surface reason."[43] His fascination with stardom in his silk-screens coincides with disaster series of 1963-4 and the two subjects seem to be quite interconnected. His portraits of Marilyn, Liz and Jackie are seen to be inspired by his preoccupation with death, and he combines glamour and morbidity just as the media often juxtaposes these seemingly diametric issues.[44] By incorporating death in these shallow images he is not adding a deeper meaning to them, but rather is bringing death to a superficial level. There are no hidden meanings to his images and he treats both glamour and death as surface issues.

Warhol's silk-screens of Jackie carry the most overt connotations of death. Clearly his images of her are derived the assassination of her husband. Warhol uses newspaper photos of her at the time of the shooting. In *Jackie(The Week That Was)*, which was done in 1963 just after the assassination on November 22, he juxtaposes photographs of her mourning with images of her smiling before the event. The composition is divided into four parts with four separate

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43 Berg, "Nothing to Lose - Interview with Andy Warhol," p.40

44 Benjamin Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One Dimensional Art:1956-1966." Andy Warhol: A Retrospective, Kynaston McShine Ed., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1989, p.56

images: one smiling and three at the funeral. Warhol emphasizes the diagonal of squares from the upper left to the bottom right by using different colors to enhance her media role as a grieving widow. He highlights her transformation from smiling first lady to mourning wife. In reference to the assassination Warhol commented, "I'd been thrilled having Kennedy as president...but it didn't really bother me that he was dead...What bothered me was the way in which the media was programming everybody to feel so sad."[45] His paintings allude to the artificiality of the media induced public grief. His treatment of this catastrophe still retains the detached effect and by repeating the press photographs of Jackie he refers to the desensitization which occurs after intense exposure. In *Sixteen Jackies* (1964) these same images appear even more decorative in their blue and white bands. In Warhol's other portraits of Jackie he presents her in a similar manner to his depictions of celebrities so that he overtly combines glamour with her associations with death.

Warhol began his *Marilyn* series right after her suicide, and his inspiration to begin it came from news of her death in the media. His images of Marilyn which isolate her beautiful face and fixed smile can be seen as elegies for the deceased heroine. They retain her unmarred, glittering facade and make no reference to her as the sad victim of

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[45] Warhol and Hackett, Popism, p.60

media exploitation. Warhol eventually alludes to the darker side of glamour in *Eighteen Multi-colored Marilyns* which is part of his reversal series done from 1979-86.[46] The black background with the glowing red and yellow produces a gloomy, lurid image, and Marilyn's familiar faces takes on a ghost-like appearance.

Warhol's series of Liz was also motivated by his preoccupation with death. When he painted her for the first time in *Daily News* (1962) she was gravely ill with acute pneumonia and anemia. The actress's brush with death triggered Warhol to use her as subject matter. When asked about his *Liz* portraits he states, "I started doing those a long time ago, when she was so sick and everybody said she was going to die. Now I'm doing them all over, putting bright color on her lips and eyes."[47] He takes the serious issue of death and decorates it with designer colors. Warhol's specific depiction of Liz as Cleopatra also has connotations of death. When filming began in England she was ill, and then after her life was saved by a tracheotomy, she contracted food poisoning in Italy.[48] Joanna Magloff describes the Cleopatra images of Liz as being as "gruesome

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46 Ratcliff, Warhol, p.85

47 G. R. Swenson, "What is Pop Art?" (part I) Art News, Nov. 1963. Reprinted in Pop Art Redefined, Suzi Gablik and John Russel Ed., p.118

48 Smith, Andy Warhol's' Art and Films, p.118

as the photos of the dead reproduced on the tombstones seen in Italian cemeteries."[49]

Warhol's portraits of Marilyn, Liz and Jackie also make additional references to the death of Hollywood. His use of silver symbolizes the past when actresses were photographed in front of a silver screen.[50] At the same time, Warhol describes the Hollywood of 1963 as being in limbo. He says, "The Old Hollywood was finished and the New Hollywood hadn't started yet."[51] His choice specifically of Marilyn and Liz as the celebrities on which he focuses evokes a sense of nostalgia for fading stars and their accompanying institution. Warhol paradoxically combines the concept of these women as modern icons and commodities with elegiacal reverence for the waning of Hollywood of the Fifties.

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[49] IBID

[50] Warhol and Hackett, Popism, p.65

[51] IBID p.40

Conclusion

Warhol clearly attempts to confront both life and death on a superficial level in the way that by omitting any personal commitment, he guards himself from disappointment or failure. His philosophy of detachment strongly contrasts the existentialist theory which influenced many post-modern artists. Warhol does not see man as responsible for forming his self as he strives to conceal his own identity, and instead of opposing his purposeless and seemingly hostile environment, he molds himself to it. With his focus on mass media images, he illustrates a concept of self as formed by illusory exterior appearances and embraces a sense of uncertainty and purposeless existence.

While Warhol's self negation and pessimism dominate his work and much of his life, he still retains an element of humanism and hope in his relationship with his mother and his devotion to Catholicism. While he maintains superficial, gossipy friendships with members of his Factory entourage, he retains a close relationship with his mother. She joined him in New York and lived with him for several years. Warhol often describes the wild antics and bizarre personalities of his friends, but he seems to shy away from openly discussing his relationship with his mother as though he actually holds something as sacred and personal. This same reticent attitude is true in reference to his religious devotion. He alludes to materialistic religion in his paintings, while

also regularly attending the Catholic church and volunteering for the needy. He carefully constructs an exterior image of nonchalant detachment in order to safeguard the personal values which he harbors beneath his neutral facade.

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